

Date: _____

Name: _____

OPERATION CAT DROP

A Story about Biomagnification and Introduced Species



DIRECTIONS:

1. Read the story below titled "Operation Cat Drop".
2. Look at the diagram on the back of this page.
3. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

"Operation Cat Drop"

In the early 1950s, the Dayak people in Borneo suffered from malaria. The World Health Organization had a solution: they sprayed large amounts of DDT to kill the mosquitoes which carried the malaria. The mosquitoes died the malaria declined; so far, so good. But there were side-effects. Among the first was that the roofs of people's houses began to fall down on their heads. It seemed that the DDT was also killing a parasitic wasp which had previously controlled thatch-eating caterpillars. Worse, the DDT-poisoned insects were eaten by geckoes, which were eaten by cats. The cats started to die, the rats flourished, and the people were threatened by outbreaks of sylvatic plague and typhus. To cope with these problems, which it had itself created, the World Health Organization was obliged to parachute live cats into Borneo. (McShaffrey, 1999)

From <http://actionoutdoors.org/edres/birds.catdrop.htm>.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the name (abbreviation) of the pesticide sprayed in Borneo to kill mosquitoes?
2. What side effects resulted after the spraying of this pesticide?
3. Draw a food web showing the mosquitoes, parasitic wasps, thatch-eating caterpillars, geckos, cats, and rats.
4. What is biomagnification?
5. a) Do you think the story ended after the cats were parachuted into Borneo?
b) What are some unintended side effects of introducing cats into the area?



Effect of DDT Use in Borneo

In the early 1950's the people in Borneo, suffered from Malaria the World Health Organization had a solution, kill the mosquitoes with DDT. This is what happened.

